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CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: KIDS TALK ABOUT GUNS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRD CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

FEBRUARY 3, 1994

Serial No. 82

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CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: KIDS TALK ABOUT GUNS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1994

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:33 a.m., in room 2226, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Charles E. Schumer (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Charles E. Schumer, John Conyers, Jr., Dan Glickman, Craig A. Washington, David Mann, F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Lamar S. Smith, Steven Schiff, Jim Ramstad, and George W. Gekas.

Also present: Representatives Patricia Schroeder and Melvin L. Watt.

Staff present: Tom Diaz, assistant counsel; Aliza W. Rieger, secretary; and Andrew Cowin, minority counsel.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SCHUMER

Mr. SCHUMER. The hearing will come to order. The Chair has received a request to cover this hearing in whole or in part by television broadcast, radio broadcast, still photography, or by other similar methods. In accordance with committee rule 5, permission will be granted, unless there is objection. Without objection.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We are here today to learn from our children.

Their words won't be sophisticated. They won't use the polished phrases we hear from adults who talk here so often about guns. The words of these children will be simple. They speak the special candor unique to children. Their simple, honest words will burn this awful truth into this record: Guns are killing and wounding our children in record numbers.

Guns, mostly handguns, are killing 13 children every single day; 13 children are murdered, killed by accident, or take their own lives with guns every day. This is the equivalent of killing a classroom full of children every 2 days. And guns wound at least 30 more children every day.

Guns are exacting that toll from children of every race, religion, ecomomic class, ethnic origin, and community in America. No society in all of its modern history has equaled this horrible record. It should make us weep with anger. And yet these sad shameful numbers are increasing. The rate of gun murders is accelerating among children as we speak.

These children are innocent victims. The guns killing them were made, bought, and first sold by adults, not by children. Children don't manufacture guns. Adults do. Children don't make ammunition. Adults do. Children don't own gun stores. Children don't create advertising campaigns to sell guns. Children don't make films and television shows glamorizing gun violence. And children don't buy guns for gun runners who put handguns into the hands of criminals and even children. Adults do.

Adults do all of these things, and yet children suffer the consequences. These children sitting right here before us, these children suffer the consequences.

Now, this is an especially timely day for this hearing. Because even as these children sit here, adults are doing something else that will affect the lives of the children. This week is the gun industry's annual "fly-in." Industry executives, advertising flacks, professional lobbyists—all adults—are walking the halls out there. They are pressuring a target list of Congressmen and Congresswomen. They want them to vote against the ban on assault weapons and other gun control legislation.

What a shameful, damning contrast.

For the last 3 days, these adult gun pushers have been twisting arms in their suits and Gucci shoes. Tonight they will fly back out in their Lear jets or first-class airfare seats.

I invite those lobbyists to come here and look these children in the eye. Because no industry group flies these children in to lobby Congress for a week. There are no lobbyists in silk suits and Gucci shoes for the children whose parents, friends, and role models have been killed. There are no Lear jets for the tens of thousands of children whose childhoods have been stolen.

On the contrary, Robert McGillicuddy, the father of sixth grader Megan McGillicuddy, got up at midnight and drove all night from New York in the family van so that Megan and Tiffany Cruz could testify today.

Zoe Johnstone and her mother Tina paid their own way to get here. Other children from around the Washington area got here today on their own hook.

So you are darned right, we should have this hearing.

Only a handful of dedicated adults work every day for the lives of these children. People like Marian Wright Edelman, the president of the Children's Defense Fund, from whom we will also hear. People like my colleague Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, whose Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families held a hearing on kids and violence last year. And without objection, and if there is no objection, we are going to put the record of that hearing into our record today.

These children's voices are small and soft. They are not often heard in the vast Halls of this great Congress and yet they loom over us larger than the greatest speech the mightiest ever gave here. We must listen to these children. We must act. We must end gun violence. Because these kids are our future. When we save the life of even one of them, we save the world.

Mr. Sensenbrenner.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Thank you very much. What we are going to hear this morning, Mr. Chairman, is the tip of the iceberg in terms of tragedies that have affected children.

But I can't help but think, as I review the biographies of the witnesses on our first panel this morning, many of them have become victims of tragedy because of the breakdown of family values in our society today. Parents who don't want to spend time with their kids. Parents, teachers, and schools that do not teach the word "responsibility," that one is responsible for his or her own actions. The get-rich-quick schemes that many drug peddlers push upon people as low as the junior high school level where you can get a lot of money by breaking the law and by selling poison to your friends to shoot into their bodies.

And because of this breakdown in family values and the fact that anything that goes wrong always seems to be someone else's fault and few people want to accept responsibility for their own actions today, kids have gotten caught up in this tragedy as well. And I think that that is probably the real tragedy of American society in the 1990's.

Now, there is a big debate that will go on in this country on what role the Government has in solving this problem. And while Government, in my opinion, can play a constructive role, it cannot play the primary role in solving this problem. The primary role of solving this problem rests with parents, with churches, and with other relatives. Because only when kids are brought up literally from the cradle learning the difference between right and wrong and being able to say something is wrong and being able to say "no" will we be able to get a handle on this.

Now, I want to make it quite plain that what we are hearing today in the first panel are victims. And these are good kids. And these are kids whose parents have taken that time to teach them the difference between right and wrong. And unfortunately, they happened to be at the wrong place and the wrong time and gotten in the crossfire of those that didn't learn that essential difference. But, what I also would like to say is, at least in my State, which is an active conservation State and where a lot of people enjoy hunting which is a legal use of firearms, there are programs and there are families that have gotten kids involved in learning how to respect firearms, and I would like to conclude my opening statement by reading into the record a letter that I received from just one of these kids who happens to live in the congressional district that I am honored to represent.

Mr. SCHUMER. Without objection, we will enter the whole letter into the record.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER [reading]:

Dear Congressman Sensenbrenner, my name is Jonathan Kizivat. I am a 16-year-old boy living in Brookfield, Wisconsin. I have many interests including playing sports, being active in school clubs, fishing, and our church youth group, but perhaps my interest that has given me the most fun is hunting.

I have been hunting since I was 13 years old. My hunting career started with a hunter education and safety course. In this course, safety ethics and conservation were taught. I left the course with a great respect for guns and a sense of responsibility of gun ownership. It is my feeling that hunters take responsibility for their guns by following important safety rules for gun handling, storage, and the ethics of gun usage.

Hunting has given me many opportunities to spend valuable time with my family and friends. My regular hunting partners are my grandpa and uncle, people who have been positive role models in my life. When it is not the hunting season, many hours have been enjoyably spent with me at the rifle range improving our skills. While hunting, I have been able to mingle and carry on conversations with adults who have helped develop my confidence in being with groups of people. There is a wonderful feeling of being out in the outdoors with family or friends facing the challenges of the hunt.

Even though I have not been successful in two years of deer hunting, I still look forward to the season. The successful hunt does not necessarily mean that you shoot a deer. I also feel good about hunting because I am contributing to wildlife management. The guns are treated with respect. I take great care in following all the safety rules of gun hunting and gun handling. Some of the best memories are of the times three generations of my family have been together in the great outdoors on a hunting trip.

I look forward to being able to share the memories of hunting together with my son or daughter and to share with them the pleasures of the sport. It is my hope that hunting will be available for us and our children in the future, sincerely, Jonathan Kizivat.

Now, this shows that when parents get involved and family gets involved and imposes upon a young person respect and responsibility and the difference between right and wrong, not all children's experiences with guns can be tragic and negative.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Sensenbrenner.

Those bells meant that we have to go vote. So maybe we will come back and continue the opening statements, if that is OK with my three other colleagues. OK. We are going to recess for a very short time. We are going to vote and come back. We are temporarily recessed.

[Brief recess.]

Mr. SCHUMER. The hearing will resume.

I want to apologize particularly to the witnesses and just explain to them while we have this hearing we also have votes on the floor of the House. When those bells ring and the buzzers go off, we simply have to go over and vote. I actually moved the hearing back to 10:30 because this vote was originally scheduled for 10 o'clock, but they pushed it back. When we go back and forth, it is not out of lack of interest but simply because we have to go vote.

The next gentleman I would like to call on for an opening statement—I would ask the Members if we can keep them to some modicum, some limit, I won't set any—is my distinguished predecessor as chairman of this subcommittee, Mr. Conyers.

Mr. CONYERS. Thank you very much and good morning.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, this is an important hearing. I am going to ask that my statement be reproduced in full in the record.

Mr. SCHUMER. Without objection.

Mr. CONYERS. And just add that before coming down here, I called back to Detroit to Mrs. Clementine Barfield, who heads up the Save Our Sons and Daughters Committee of 7 years, which arose out of her own child's violent death by gun. And she is our metropolitan expert. And I said, do you think that this kind of hearing would serve a useful purpose in metropolitan Detroit? And I want to just tell what you she told me. She said, I have heard it all and it might be good to hear it again. To that extent, it could be good. But she said, we have got to affirmatively teach peace and affirmatively be against guns and help young people, particularly,

separate out many issues that come over in pros and cons and the very great number of mixed messages that go out.

And to that extent, this hearing and Dr. Edelman and others can be of great use. What I am looking at here is how what we learn here today can be put into the crime bill that we are working on in our other capacity, and it seems to me that tying these things together will put us in the real world of how we can make important improvements in this subject.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Chairman Conyers. That is one of the main goals we have in trying to put together a fair crime bill.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Conyers follows:]

Statement of Representative Conyers, Jr.

Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice

February 3, 1994

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to hear the testimony of these brave children. I want to commend you for having the foresight to bring these young people here to the Nation's capitol to be a part of this important legislative process. The courage of these young people to testify must be rewarded with our undivided attention as they help us understand the frightening reality behind the statistics we read about with increasing frequency.

This generation is growing up in fear, afraid to walk around after dark, afraid to talk to others for fear of offense. Twenty four percent of children, according to a recent Newsweek/ Children's Defense Fund survey, report having witnessed someone being threatened by a gun and seventeen percent have seen someone shot. Exposure to this kind of violence has an impact not only on the children wounded by the weapons but on those who witness it and those who hear about it. It is clear that we must take immediate action to ameliorate this national trauma.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics since 1988 teenage boys in the United States are more likely to die from gunshot wounds than from all natural causes combined. For African American males the impact of guns is even more terrifying for they are the leading cause of death among 10-24 year olds.

Schools, traditional safe zones, are no longer are able to cope with the over 100,000 children that carry guns to school every day.

Our failure to control one of the most obvious factors contributing to youth violence - gun proliferation serves to legitimize this form of violence and maintains it, damning the next generation to a future riddled with the corpses of their friends and loved ones. The stories we will hear today provide all the impetus we need to pass legislation that prohibits the possession of a firearms by minors.

Millions of our children will go through the process of being issued temporary drivers training permits, take written and driving tests behind the wheel and stand in long lines just to be issued the right to get a license to drive a car. We even do a better job controlling the accessibility to cigarettes than we do the accessibility of guns.

Many of kids are already carrying guns before they can even drive. This is a national tragedy. I invite all opponents of our efforts to enact handgun legislation to hear the stories of these children and the futures they have seen destroyed. Guns do not belong in our schools, on our playgrounds or at the swimming pool.

We are now engaged in a fierce debate over a crime bill that wants to lock many of our children away for a long time. While it does contain some constructive youth programs, it also wants to punish young people for the nation's failure to address the causes of violence, poverty, gun proliferation and few job opportunities. One particularly punitive measure; children aged 13 and over will be charged as adults.

We cannot talk about getting guns out of our children's lives without some talk about new remedies, and new approaches that will create an environment where our children can grow, learn, and develop into responsible adults.

The answers to many of the problems will hear today are addressed in H.R. 3315 the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Reform Act sponsored by Rep. Craig Washington, myself and many other thoughtful members. Our bill is a sensible and thoughtful approach to crime that supports a variety of programs to prevent violence against women and children; place a ban on terrible assault weapons, tightens gun licensing laws, provide drug treatment, encourage economic development, and job training.

Successful community intervention programs like Detroit's Save Our Sons and Daughters, run by Clementine Barfield, must be encouraged and complement the efforts of the federal government. These are the strategies that we should be seriously considering as we talk about solutions that will bring real promise to the slogan "save the children."

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Smith of Texas.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I think this hearing today can serve a useful purpose. We know that the point of the hearing is to discuss, in general, violence in America but more specifically violence aimed toward children, particularly violence committed with firearms and other types of weapons. But I don't think we really advance the debate of how to reduce violence in America by referring to law-abiding citizens, who may be members of the American Shooting Sports Council, who happen to be in town as individuals, who wear Gucci loafers, fly first class, and wear silk suits. I think we would be able to advance the debate far better on how to reduce violence in America if we were to focus as much attention as we are today on how violence wreaks havoc on the lives of children, on the need for rehabilitation, on the need for punishment of criminals, particularly repeat criminals, because I happen to believe that no matter how many times we beat up on law-abiding citizens, we are really never going to reduce crime in America.

We need to address the two points that I just made, rehabilitation and punishment, but we also need to recognize that no matter how many gun control laws we pass, no matter how many police officers we put in the street, we are really never going to solve the problem of violence in America until we address the core values that underlie the actions that result in crimes. And until we in society do a better job of respecting law and order, do a better job of setting standards of right and wrong, and do a better job of pointing out the need for self-discipline and respect of other's private property and respect of other's lives, we are really never going to reduce crime in general and particularly violence in America.

So I hope that this committee in the future will spend a great deal of time talking about the illegal use of guns and how we can prevent that type of violence from reoccurring here in America.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Glickman.

Mr. GLICKMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think this is a very important hearing and, Chuck, you have been out in front of this issue like nobody else here on the Hill. You deserve special praise for it. We passed a bill last year which I had the privilege of sponsoring which would make it a crime for a youth under 18 to possess a handgun or for an adult to transfer a handgun to a youth. I want to know if that will make any difference to you all.

I am interested in hearing what the kids here have to say about why they have guns and other issues involving schools, like are you afraid at school and is there anything that can be done to make you less afraid of firearms in schools?

We have this problem with the drug—with the gun free school zones, that the courts have taken kind of a mixed attitude on, but I am really interested to know personal perspectives about violence, because a lot of the problems of crime cannot be solved with Federal legislation at all. It has to be solved with attitudinal change, with cultural change, and with basically things unrelated to the laws, although a lot of the stuff we can do can help.

So how you really feel about this problem is going to have a great impact on us and I thank you all for coming.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Schiff of New Mexico.

Mr. SCHIFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing. I want to say that despite some disagreements, we share the same goals, and I want to say that you have always been fair, I think, to both sides of the aisle on these issues.

I would like to say something very briefly. I would take this opportunity to urge you to give a higher priority to my request that is before you that you have acknowledged that a higher priority in terms of timing to have an oversight hearing on the Department of Justice's enforcement of current Federal gun control laws.

I have gotten some statistics from the Department of Justice which, in my mind, although they indicate some improvement from some programs overall, still presents an extremely poor record of enforcing current Federal gun control laws, and it seems to me that that is a present issue whether we pass a crime bill, and I hope we will, or we don't, those laws are on the books today. Those laws should be enforced. Those laws are not being enforced.

Just one more word on that, because I think the prospect for continuing not to enforce laws is present in the bill that Mr. Glickman drafted, I believe called the Youth Handgun Safety Act, which I supported and as Mr. Glickman, Congressman Glickman stated, one provision of that bill would make it a criminal offense for a minor to possess a firearm unless under immediate adult supervision in certain circumstances.

And as I read through the testimony of the young people we are about to hear from, Mr. Chairman, they make constant reference to teenagers having guns. So this is a serious problem, and I think Congressman Glickman did a service in drafting the bill, but the Federal Government historically does not prosecute juveniles in Federal court. It is almost unheard of, relatively speaking.

So I have written to the Attorney General of the United States twice saying that the Justice Department supported this bill, the House passed it. The Senate passed a similar version. How does the Justice Department intend to enforce this bill if it becomes law since the Justice Department doesn't prosecute juveniles? Despite sending two letters to the Attorney General, I have received no response. And that tells me that if the bill that was just referred to becomes law, it is going to become another cruel hoax on the American people by putting a law on the books that nobody intends to enforce. I think we ought to get to the bottom of that as soon as possible.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SCHUMER. I thank you, Mr. Schiff, for your contributions here and, as I mentioned to you, we will have a hearing on that issue. We are just trying to do a lot of things at once here.

Mr. Mann.

Mr. MANN. I will waive the statement and look forward to hearing from the young people who have taken the time to come here.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Mann.

I don't know if we should go to Mr. Washington or Mr. Gekas. Mr. Gekas, Mr. Washington has as usual gracefully deferred to Mr. Gekas, not on the issues, but on the courtesies.

Mr. GEKAS. I thank the Chair. The opening statements thus far have duly characterized the approaches that we are going to assume as we listen to the testimony today. I believe and everybody knows for sure that the children are going to bring to us a firm snapshot of what they have suffered in the wake of the new syndrome in our country, but that snapshot, if we look very closely, will have adults lurking in the background, adults that should be in the picture, and if we have our way about it, we are going to insist in different forms and in different ways they should appear in the picture.

The principals of the schools and the teachers and the faculty are adults that are in that background, seen or unseen. The parents, as has been mentioned in some of the opening statements, of course. The cop on the beat, the security officer at the school. The law enforcement structure all the way to the presiding judge in the particular jurisdiction in which the kids reside. All of these adults who are in this picture, whether we like it or not, they are an influence, a responsibility and should be, just as the kids will relate about their principals, heroic principals and their teachers and their parents, should be the focus for us to help the kids by helping the adults do their job responsibly and perhaps much of the violence or much of the pain and suffering can be avoided in the future.

So I am anxious to hear the youngsters and anxious to hear what their view is, too, of where they are influenced or how they are influenced by the adults in their lives.

I thank the chairman.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Gekas. Mr. Washington.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I sincerely thank you for giving all of us and the American people this opportunity, and I really do mean that, because whenever we have a hearing, it requires us as people who have been given a special place in our lives and in our society to focus.

We have a thousand different things that we have to think about on a daily basis that concerns the lives of people. But this hearing makes us focus.

And I glanced through and read some of the testimony that we are going to hear from these young people, and it took me out of the political realm and back into an earlier time in my life when I tried cases for a living. And every one of us knows that we are going to hear, just from reading it, without having it verbalized by young human beings who have been touched in so many ways by the pain and anguish that our society feels, is going to be such powerful demonstrative evidence that we have to do something.

We have to stop wringing our hands. We have to stop pointing the finger at each other and talking about these children. Cut through all those things. Children have a way of cutting through all the BS that adults engage in from time to time for one reason or another and getting down to the hard cold facts.

We have a responsibility not only as adults but as so-called leaders in our society to do something. And to not find ways to make excuses for the facts which are irrefutable and immutable.

Children are killing each other with guns. They don't have any business having guns in their hands. I don't say that as an adult

who preaches to children but we as adults ought to produce a society and a way of thinking in which children are not only able to have guns but shouldn't want to have guns, know the danger of a weapon.

Sure, sportsmen and people like that ought to have them, but we have a duty to ensure that we are more responsible in our stewardship to ensure that these children have what we had, an opportunity to live a happy, productive childhood, to grow into a caring, nuturing adult.

I don't know any of you, how you grew up, but by the fact that we have arrived where we are and we have been privileged by citizens in our communities to be elected to hold high public office means that we did something right, our parents did something right, our neighbors did something right in allowing us to grow up.

But after this hearing, after the lights go down and after the cameras are off, our responsibility remains the same. We are going to have to stop wringing our hands, gentlemen, and do something. It doesn't matter whose bill it is. It doesn't matter whose name is on it. It doesn't matter whether it is Democrat or Republican. Those things don't matter. When a child is laying on a slab in the morgue as a result of an adult or a child killing that person, then we as a society are harmed by that because their death diminishes us so greatly, and we are taking away something that is so precious and that is they ought to grow up being children.

And so what I want to do, Mr. Chairman, is after this hearing is over, we have got to find ways to put this into action. You have forced us to focus on it. We read about it every day in the metro section of the paper and we say, somebody ought to do something about it. Well, fellows, we are the way. We are the people that have been elected to do something about it. It is time for us to start.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Washington.

Let me say that this is one of the things we are going to do this year. We are going to try to do it in as fair and bipartisan a way as is possible, but there is anguish. There is anguish out there in the land, in every part of the country. And we first have to see the problem and then we have to act on it. We can't have another bunch of speeches.

Let me just make one other point before we call our witnesses. We have had a lot of people mention personal responsibility, and adults should be responsible. We all agree, I agree, adults were responsible for what happened to these kids. These are responsible kids. They didn't bring on what happened to them by themselves. It happened from other people and it is our job to see that the vast majority of people throughout America who have responsible parents and role models and figures and teachers don't get hurt by the few who aren't. That is our mission. It is not simply to preach responsibility. There are some people to whom you can preach all the responsibility you want and they are not going to listen, for whatever reason. But what about everybody else? That is why we are here.

I would now like to call our first panel forward. They are all the kids and maybe the subcommittee staff, Aliza, can help them, help the kids come up to where their seats are.

OK. Well, thank you. I just want to say that I think every one of us here think you are a beautiful bunch of kids, and I know that it is not easy to come before one of these panels. I have sat on the other side myself and you tend to get a little nervous when you see all these people looking at you. Well, we are fathers or grandfathers. We have kids and we know what it is like to raise kids and what you go through, so I know you may be a little nervous but just try to regard it as if we are all just talking to one another. Say what you think and when you get asked questions, just respond right from the heart. You don't have to put on any airs or anything else. Just be yourselves because that is more than good enough for us.

Let me then say that there are 11 children here. Each of their lives has been touched in some way by guns, and I am not going to go into detail about each of them. They will tell each of their own stories in their own words themselves.

We will begin with Deseree Troy. She is from Indianapolis, IN. She is 13 years old. And there is just one thing I would like to do. The biography that was handed out mentioned that Deseree's parents were on vacation. They weren't. They were at work when all of this happened, and I didn't want to leave any impression that she was left unsupervised in any way.

So Deseree, you may begin. And thank you very much for coming. You are really helping your country by coming.

STATEMENT OF DESEREE TROY

Ms. TROY. My name is Deseree Troy. On August 1, 1989, I was accidentally shot. Even though it was an accident, it nearly took my life and it was all due to ignorance. I am not antigun. I think people have the right to bear arms, but I also think that us, as other people, have the right not to be killed by those guns.

My parents taught me that without a responsible adult, guns are bad, but it takes more than just two, it takes us as a country. All of us. Yes, you got the Brady bill passed. Well during those 5 days, why not have a gun education class for a couple or 3 or 4 hours. It is a hassle, but would you rather be hassled by that or by paying for a funeral bill because your child got ahold of a gun?

Now, I ask you, how many more kids have to be killed before we realize what is going on or before we do something about it? Why is it that I have to be afraid to go to school? I get scared that if I look at the wrong person the wrong way I might get shot. Why do we have to be afraid of walking out of our house, worrying if there is going to be a drive-by?

I will tell you we are letting them take over. Who are they? They are the gangsters, the murderers, the drug dealers, all of them. Now, I wonder when are we going to take a stand and do something about it. I am ready. I would like to know if you are.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Deseree.

Our next witnesses are Megan McGillicuddy and Tiffany Cruz. They are both in the sixth grade at PS–15 in Brooklyn, NY, not far from my congressional district. That school is now called the Patrick Daly School, named after their principal who was gunned down. We will first have Megan and then Tiffany.

STATEMENT OF MEGAN McGILLICUDDY

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. Good morning.

Mr. SCHUMER. Megan, just push the microphone down a little. If you could speak into it, that would be great.

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. Good morning. Thank you for inviting me here. My name is Megan McGillicuddy and I live in Brooklyn, NY.

Just 2 years ago the principal of my school, Patrick Daly, was killed when he was caught in the crossfire of three drug dealers who were shooting at each other. Mr. Daly was a heroic man. I say that because one day he was running through the Red Hook housing project chasing after a kid who ran away from a fight at school.

Mr. Daly was an angel to me and many other Red Hook residents. If you were to walk into a store today in Red Hook, you would probably see a picture of him on the wall somewhere. He will always be remembered. After Mr. Daly was killed, policemen were on every corner but after a while they didn't come any more. When the police were here, I knew that someone cared about Red Hook, but now hope of ever being safe seems to have left with Mr. Daly and the police.

It was hard to imagine that Mr. Daly was gone because he was always on top of every problem. But now I guess he is on top of the world.

Just last year some guy was going around shooting at people's houses and windows. My friend's house was shot at but luckily she was on vacation so she didn't get hurt.

I think Fernando Mateo's idea for the goods for guns program is great. I also hope that in the future other States will take on this program, and a good way to cut the killing rates down is to stop making guns, and even toy guns. You could let the workers go into a different type of manufacturing such as books, computers, inner-city farming, et cetera, et cetera.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to be heard.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Megan. Tiffany.

STATEMENT OF TIFFANY CRUZ

Ms. CRUZ. Good morning, Congressmen, Congresswomen, ladies, and gentlemen. My name is Tiffany Cruz and I am a sixth grader at PS–15 in Brooklyn, NY, the school, if you recall, that only a little over a year ago lost its principal in a hail of gunfire.

Where I live, and in many other cities like mine, people can't be afraid to die because you can just be shot on your way to school or the bus stop or even in your own home.

In Red Hook, you have to learn how to survive and for most teenagers drugs, guns, and gangs are the ways of doing it. I have to stay inside because of what is going on outside, and even being inside is not safe. In Red Hook, the sound of gunfire is as familiar as the sound of a bird humming in the spring. It is sad but true.

I want to be able to go outside without being afraid. I want my baby brother growing up in a life of opportunity. I don't want to lose him or anyone else to a bullet. I can't help but pray to God that my brothers won't be involved in gangs and won't be selling drugs on corners like some people I know.

About 2 months ago, a junior high school girl showed me and my friends a gun and said she was going to shoot another girl for lik-

ing her boyfriend; 3 days later, the girl she was going to shoot got beat up on a bridge coming home from school.

It is easy to get a gun into school, especially public schools, because they don't have metal detectors, and sometimes even metal detectors don't work. I heard a person got shot in a school with a metal detector, so it really doesn't make a difference if the school has a metal detector or not.

And so today I have to come here to testify and to ask you, Congressmen and Congresswomen, if you care about the future of America, you have to care about us because we are the future of America, and the way it is turning out, the future is not going to be so great.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Tiffany.

Our next two witnesses are Monique Malloy and Alicia Brown. Monique is a 16-year-old sophomore at Eastern High School here in Washington. Alicia is 14 years old. She is in the eighth grade at Eliot Junior High School in Washington. Both Monique and Alicia have lost several young friends to gunfire. Just last week, shooting broke out at Alicia's school.

Monique.

STATEMENT OF MONIQUE MALLOY

Ms. MALLOY. Good morning. My name is Monique Malloy. I am 16 years old. I am a sophomore at Eastern High School here in the District of Columbia.

My cousin was killed just over 1 year ago. He was shot 16 times. I knew four other people who have been shot and killed by guns. All of these young people were killed for no good reason.

Why do so many kids carry guns today? Kids carry guns because they think they gain respect. I say respect is not something you gain by carrying a gun. It is something you earn. But there is so much peer pressure on teenagers that they get involved in guns, anyway. And it is not just a male issue anymore. It is teenagers, period. Teenagers, boys and girls both, are carrying guns.

I wish I could tell the people who are out killing with guns about the pain they cause. I wish they could feel the pain I saw in my aunt when my cousin was killed. I wish they could feel the pain my whole family went through. But the people out there with guns don't experience these things themselves.

Guns affect our lives more than they do older people. You hear about the impact of guns. You read about the impact of guns, but we see this in our everyday lives.

Because of guns, we have to be careful about everything we say or do around other people. It is not just about saying something in terms of disrespect or even people taking what you say the wrong way. You also have to worry because you might be talking to someone who is holding a lot of anger inside because someone in their family was shot. They might take their anger out on you.

One of my best friend's brother was shot and killed last week. It changed my friend so much. I am afraid of the anger he is holding inside.

I think the news media is part of the problem. They feel like they have to put on a show about the violence. They get ratings from showing dead bodies. So kids who haven't even reached their teen-

age years see dead bodies on the ground. They see people being locked up. They see stacks of money from drug busts. These young kids don't understand what is going on. They think it is exciting. They say, I want to be like him.

We have to do something. Guns started being an issue back in the 1980's but it is not better now. It is worse. We need to get rid of guns, but we also need to do some things to help kids before they get into trouble.

I could have been one of the sisters in trouble out there on the streets. I was headed that way but the boys and girls club I belong to helped me with jobs and after school programs. We need more things like that. But the funds for the club have been cut. We need to do both—get rid of guns and help kids before they commit crimes. Thank you.

Mr. SCHUMER. Alicia.

STATEMENT OF ALICIA BROWN

Ms. BROWN. You may have read in the newspapers about the shooting in my school last week. Guns have been a part of my life since I was the age of 12. That was when my friend Scooter was killed with a gun. Since then, four of my friends have been shot and killed on the streets.

One of them was my friend Hank. This night, I heard gun shots. Then after that, I saw Hank lying on the ground. He wasn't dead yet but he was dying. It was a terrible thing to experience. To see your friend lying on the ground dying and there is nothing you can do to help him. Someone—it was—it was terrible to see someone you know, someone who used to make you laugh lying there, dying right in front of you.

Nobody deserves—nobody deserves to have their life taken from them. We need your help. We need to stop seeing our friends killed and hurt by guns. This isn't like television. This is real. A lot of the older people are shocked that kids have to think about guns. It was not as bad when you were—it was not as bad when you were growing up, but things have changed. There is a lot of anger inside young people today they don't talk about. Instead, they take their anger out on other people. And if they have guns, they use them.

The kids who use guns think it will make people look up to them. They don't think about the pain it puts the families and others through.

Because of guns, kids have to be cautious about everything they do or say. You have to think about the way you look at people. You have to think about how you react to what they say. If someone says something to you, you have to think about what you say back. You just don't—you just don't know how far they might go. You don't—you don't know what that other person might do. They might have a gun and they might kill you.

We hear people talking and talking about getting guns off the streets but aren't seeing it happen on the streets. Kids still get guns.

I know you have done some things to get rid of guns but there is much more that could be done. I wouldn't want this to happen

to anybody. But I think if people were to lose somebody close to them like we have, they would do something about guns.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Alicia, for your moving testimony.

OK. Our next witness is Margaret Childers. She is a senior at Georgetown Day School and lives in Chevy Chase, MD. One of Margaret's classmates was gunned down at random on his own front lawn. Margaret.

STATEMENT OF MARGARET CHILDERS

Ms. CHILDERS. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, my name is Margaret Childers and I am a 17-year-old student at Georgetown Day High School here in Washington, DC.

Like the others sitting at this table, my life has been changed forever by an act of handgun violence. On August 9, 1992, my classmate, Alain Colaco, was gunned down while he was weeding his front lawn. Alain and the man who took his life had never met before. Alain's killer later told police that he just had "the urge to kill."

The last time I gave this speech I said, like most kids, I never thought that gun violence could affect me or my family. I live in a so-called safe neighborhood and go to a "safe" school. Well, I think that it has become hard for kids to even hold that perception anymore. There is no such thing as a "safe" neighborhood or a "safe" school. It is becoming a sobering reality in this country that gun violence can affect anyone, anywhere, and at any time. And it not only can, it does.

Alain's death was a staggering waste. When you are 15, you think your whole life is ahead of you. A loving son, talented scientist, aspiring Olympic athlete, Alain must have thought his whole life was ahead of him. I, too, thought I had all the time in the world. It will always haunt me that I never took the time to get to know Alain well, even though I knew how special he was. It was truly my loss. If there is one thing I have learned from this tragedy, it is that what needs saying needs saying now. There is no tomorrow. There is only today.

Alain's death demanded a strength in me I didn't even know I had. Since that time, I have worked with Handgun Control, Inc., and the Center for the Prevention of Handgun Violence to try to curb this growing epidemic. The cure will only come from a partnership between grassroots education and the kind of legislation that will keep guns out of the wrong hands. But we need your help.

On the morning of his death, Alain addressed fellow recipients of the American Cancer Society's Student Research Scholarship and said, "the future is ours." Alain's future has been taken away so we must act for him. I urge you. I implore you to take action. Thank you.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Margaret.

Our next witness is Janea Wells. She is a 15-year-old ninth grader at Fletcher Johnson School here in Washington. Janea has actually suffered from post-traumatic-stress syndrome from witnessing the shooting of a friend. Janea.

STATEMENT OF JANEA WELLS

Ms. WELLS. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Janea Wells.

This morning I have come to speak on the subject of violence and especially gun violence and how this can affect a person. I have very strong feelings on this subject because I have become a victim of this type of violence. It is so bad that I am scared to leave my house in the daytime or evening. I feel this is unfair to me and everyone else who has to live in my community.

One experience that I have had that really shook me up was about a year ago when a friend of mine got shot and killed. It was very bad because I had to—I had to see him die, lying on the ground. He got shot 17 times.

A bullet came through my window and a few other people's windows. The place where the bullet came through, my mother had just moved in time. This really got to me because I had to see this happen to him. I would like to move away from this neighborhood but right now my mother doesn't have enough money to move.

I have realized that something this tragic doesn't only happen to bad people, this can happen to anyone. Because I have had to go through this experience, I feel I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. My dream is to one day become a criminal lawyer to put people like this in jail who commit these types of crimes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you very much, Janea.

Our next witness is Zoe Johnstone. She is a 14-year-old ninth grader at Curtis High School in Staten Island. Her father was shot and later died from his wounds while on a business trip.

STATEMENT OF ZOE JOHNSTONE

Ms. JOHNSTONE. My father David Johnstone's life was cut short by a gun. He was shot on a well-lit, quiet street in a good neighborhood. The gunshot itself did not immediately kill him. It severed his spinal cord, paralyzing his legs. It was a month later when I was so proud of him that a blood clot formed in his legs and ended his life. A week before, he had been moved into the more advanced wheelchair class. Just 2 days before his death, our whole family had walked up and down the East River.

I remember the morning that I learned he had died. I was sleeping late when I heard sounds downstairs. I found out later that it was my mother and my aunt sobbing.

My father did nothing to provoke these people. They didn't even mean to shoot him. The gun was meant to scare him into giving his money, a thing he would have gladly done. However, the gun fired behind him. No words were spoken. The three kids my age and older didn't take the $212 or the credit cards. One of them wanted to give a present to his girlfriend.

This loss of life was wasteful and stupid. It could have been prevented so easily. The gun that was used to kill my father was stolen from an elderly man in Florida. He bought it for protection. Guns don't protect you from anything. Usually they are used accidentally, killing a child that was curious or a teenager that was depressed. In my New York City public school, you are told that it doesn't even make sense to carry weapons because in a fight they will probably be used against you just like a gun in a house.

I would give anything to see my father again. Please stop this daily slaughter of innocent, wonderful human beings.

Mr. SCHUMER. Our next witness is Rushon Harrison. Rushon is a 17-year-old junior at the Wildcat Academy in New York City. He is a keen observer of guns in his community but has been helped to avoid involvement in guns through the Wildcat Academy. Rushon.

STATEMENT OF RUSHON HARRISON

Mr. HARRISON. For many years now, guns and gun-related violence have had a long-lasting effect on my life. Violence in my community is so severe that people there have become afraid of one another. My neighborhood has become a place of fear for everyone.

The crimes that occur are very brutal due to the large number of people who own guns. Everyday citizens feel that they have no other choice but to carry a gun because they realize that drug dealers and drug users are carrying them. What people fail to realize is that the people who are distributing guns are mostly the drug dealers themselves. These dealers carry guns to protect their merchandise; just in case they are robbed.

Violence has gotten to the point where everybody is worried about protecting themselves, their family, and their loved ones by the use of guns. Some people use guns as protection and only protection; but others carry guns as a sense of power and control. They realize that most people tremble in fear at the sight of a gun and this gives them a feeling of being invincible.

Many of the killings today by guns are over small arguments or fights which causes the victim to seek revenge. Other causes of violence by guns are people who set out to kill someone so that they can gain respect from their peers. They would rather have people fear them for being a killer rather than like them for being themselves. Such violence has forced me to mature faster and to make more careful decisions.

I have witnessed gun violence firsthand. Though I have not been affected physically by guns, they have, without question, touched me emotionally. I have had friends shot just for looking at another guy's girlfriend.

One incident that happened this past summer was where a friend of mine was shot in the head over a basketball bet. He wasn't killed but just the sight of another person bleeding and almost dying over a small thing that had no significance which could have been resolved with less violence is a sight that is not soon erased from your mind. Such a sight makes you feel like throwing up.

Since I first witnessed gun violence, it has become a never-ending story. Many of my friends have suffered and I cannot tell you how heavy this makes my heart.

There was another occasion when my friends and I were walking to the store and a guy I knew named Jack was riding a bike and a few kids just walked up behind him as he stopped for the light. They argued for a while and one of the kids pulled out a gun and shot him in the chest twice without any remorse. The group of kids dashed off on their bikes with Jack's gold chains.

Yet another time another one of my close friends named Karthrahl was killed just as a matter of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Karthrahl was a young drug dealer. He had a great deal of friends and was well-known throughout the neighborhood.

One day he had gone with two other people, Buzzy and Beany, to pick up some drugs. He did not seem as though he wanted to go because he was playing basketball with the rest of us and having fun. So he left and that was the last time that I saw Karthrahl. He and Beany were shot fatally in a set up. Buzzy was shot also but somehow escaped alive.

Also, I have a cousin who is only 13 but acts as if he is an adult. He, too, sells drugs. I feel sorry for him because he just wants money to impress people.

But one day while he was going to go with his friends uptown, he instead decided to go home with me. It became a good thing that he did because when the next day came, we learned that one of his friends was brutally murdered. The gun was put into his mouth and the trigger was pulled. As this was happening, his friends ran and left him for dead.

In order to tell you about all of the times that I have been directly affected by guns and violence, I would have to talk until this time tomorrow.

I am here today to speak before your subcommittee because I want a future. And unless we as a nation stop the violence, I, and many teens like me, will never live to see 21.

My school, Wildcat Academy, has provided me that hope. Wildcat Academy is an alternative high school which has helped me to gain trust in others as well as taught me how to respect others.

My life has straightened out and has become more promising. The Wildcat faculty and staff help me know that there are still teachers who care. That is a close sense of family at our academy. This makes it a more enjoyable and productive place to work. Wildcat Academy has helped me to believe in myself again and to have perseverance in all of my future accomplishments.

Thank you for your time. I hope that something I have said today will cause our leaders to put a stop to the violence and will save the life of some young people in America.

Again, thank you and good day.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you very much, Rushon.

Our next witness is Ruth Leeds. Ruth is a 13-year-old eighth grader at the Francis Scott Key Middle School in Fairfax County, VA, an upper-middle-class suburb. A fellow student brought a gun to her school.

STATEMENT OF RUTH LEEDS

Ms. LEEDS. My name is Ruth Leeds, and I live in Fairfax County, VA. The community I live in is to me basically typical of other suburban areas. Most of the families are middle class to somewhat wealthy and the people are very neighborly. Just by looking at it, you would never stop to consider how big a concept violence is to the citizens.

I go to Francis Scott Key Middle School. At Key, there is a large amount of diversity. The students are constantly in an environment where prejudice and violence seem completely unnecessary. Because of this diversity, all kinds of students from all over the world interact all day. In my school, kids have a chance to share their differences and to appreciate those differences. Violence need not be a part of our lives. However, because guns and violence are almost glorified by the people we look up to, we are often more concerned about violence than we are about our studies.

Earlier this year a student at Key brought a loaded weapon to school, carried it around all day in a book bag and then took it home. As a result of that, students at Key can no longer wear book bags.

I was informed of this incident by word of mouth and was immediately overcome by fear. I shuddered just thinking about how many times I passed that person in the hall or took a seat next to him. I was frightened but not shocked in the least. I wasn't shocked because teenagers see this type of behavior every day, whether it be on TV or outside their front doors. I figured someone in my school was bound to imitate it.

Today's young people are faced with the reality of such actions and are very apprehensive when it comes to their personal safety.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Ruth.

Our final witness is Fernando Mateo, Jr. He is a 14-year-old resident of Irvington, NY. Fernando's father sponsored the Toys-for-Guns Exchange, which and was actually Fernando, Jr.'s idea. He will tell about it.

STATEMENT OF FERNANDO MATEO, JR.

Mr. MATEO. Good morning. My name is Fernando Mateo, Jr. I would like to thank you all for having me be a part of this. It is a shame that I hear all these testimonies and I hear, well, I am afraid to come out of my house because there is no need for that.

My father and I came up with this program because we were watching the news one night and two people were killed and two were injured critically. He turned to me and he goes, Fernando, what more can I do for this city to stop this violence? I already have my program at Rikers. I told him, well, Dad, if it meant giving up my Christmas presents and everything I got for Christmas to get one illegal gun off the street, I would do it.

Sitting here listening to these testaments really hurts, you know. But, you know, something definitely has to be done about it when people are getting killed left and right, especially our youth. And maybe something that one of us said will touch in a way that you will do something about it.

There are a lot of things that can be done. People spend a lot of money, you know, figuring out the mentality sitting in labs studying people's behavior. One of those mentalities is that people walk around thinking, well, if you are going to carry a gun, then I am going to carry a gun because I want respect. And personally I believe that there is no need for that because to earn respect, you have to earn it the clean way.

And 20 years ago, so I have heard, you didn't have to worry about that. Well, what we have to do is we have to bring the old days back where we don't have to worry about that anymore.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Fernando.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mateo follows:]

How Guns Have Effected Me

I and Fernando Yates Jr. and I came up with "Goods for Guns." Although guns have not affected me directly they can if something is not done about them. I came up with this idea while my father and I were watching a football game. He switched the channel to the news when we saw two people fatally ~~murdered~~ shot and two critically injured. He asked me what he can do to stop violence and I told him that if it meant giving up my gifts for Christmas I'd do it.

There is no doubt about it that there is a problem when you hear the news and there are people getting killed left and right and when kids are scared to go to the store for their parents. What my father and I have done is just a scratch on the surface compared to what we can all do together. The government can also join the fight against guns by making ~~laws~~ more effective laws. The government can start by making

do checkpoints at state boundries and inspect the cars going from each state to state. The government can also be of help by hiring more ATF officers and enforcing these laws.

20 years ago (so I've heard) people didn't worry about what we worry about now. Parents worried about how late you stayed out, now people are worried about going out on your doorstep and getting shot. Back then people were able to stay out all night and have fun, now if we go outside at any time in the day we are taking our lives into our own hands.

Mr. SCHUMER. Let me thank all of the witnesses. I know that being here was not easy for anybody, and particularly for those of you who suffered such losses.

Let me say that the picture of all of you here and knowing what you have been through is worth a thousand words. I think it shows us one thing, that gun violence affects all neighborhoods, all races, all religions, all economic levels. It is everywhere.

We can no longer write you off as though these victims are isolated individuals. It won't happen to me, it won't happen to my children, it won't happen to my friends. As your stories show, it might. And, unfortunately, we can't bring back the loved ones you have lost. We can't bring back your lost childhood. And that is a very, very sad thing.

But we are going to do our best. I really don't think I have any questions. You have told your stories, your tales, so well that there is nothing more that I can say. Mr. Sensenbrenner.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank all of the witnesses for their very powerful testimony. There really isn't anything more that I can add and I have no questions.

Mr. SCHUMER. Do any of the members have questions for the panel? Mr. Schiff.

Mr. SCHIFF. I have two, Mr. Chairman. I want to say I know how difficult the testimony here was today for the young people in front of us. I think that was apparent. So there are two things I would like to ask about, if anyone wants to answer. If nobody wants to answer, that is OK. We will just go on. But to the best of my listening to you and looking at your statements, all of you recounted one or more acts of violence close to you. Nobody said what happened to the person who committed the violence in those cases. I didn't hear anyone say and this is what happened to the person who used the gun in the particular case, and I wonder if anyone wants to volunteer, particularly if the person who did the shooting was themselves a teenager about your age. I wonder if anyone wants to volunteer what happened to the person who did the shooting, did the killing? Megan McGillicuddy.

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. The three people who shot Mr. Daly with the stray bullet, they were sentenced to 20 years in jail.

Mr. SCHUMER. Tiffany, do you want to add something? Go ahead.

Ms. CRUZ. The people who shot Mr. Daly, three were between 17 and 20 and they were fighting over drugs and he just got caught in the crossfire.

Mr. SCHUMER. And they were sentenced to a 20-year jail sentence?

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. Yes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Ms. Johnstone.

Ms. JOHNSTONE. The three people who shot my father were my age and a little older and they were sentenced—one of them was caught and one of them was sentenced to 8 years in jail.

Mr. SCHIFF. Eight years.

Ms. JOHNSTONE. He was tried as a juvenile and he is kept in jail until age 21. Which is 8 years.

Mr. SCHIFF. So this person who—and I know this is difficult but let me just repeat it back. This person who was convicted of shoot-

ing your father can only be kept in custody until he is 21; that is what is going to happen?

Ms. JOHNSTONE. Actually, I think it is 25.

Mr. SCHIFF. And then he is released?

Ms. JOHNSTONE. Yes.

Mr. SCHIFF. He is going to go back out into the street?

Ms. JOHNSTONE. Yes.

Mr. SCHIFF. OK.

Mr. MATEO. A person our age shouldn't kill somebody else, but if he does, I don't think he should be put away for 25—until the age of 25. If he had the mentality to do it, he should stay there. That is my perspective of it.

Mr. SCHUMER. Alicia.

Ms. BROWN. The person who shot my friend Hank, nobody knows who did it. Whoever did it is still out there and I guess they don't feel nothing about it, but that caused many of us grief.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Chairman, may I ask one more question?

Mr. SCHUMER. Please.

Mr. SCHIFF. Thank you for your indulgence. I made a reference to my feeling we should look at the Federal enforcement of gun control laws. I think that is true of all gun control laws, State and local. Again, I am going to ask a question. If anyone wants to volunteer to answer it, I would be grateful; if not, that is all right. A number of you have talked, not all of you but a number of you, have talked about guns in your schools. And I would like to ask this question to anyone who wants to answer it. In your school, if you know of a case if someone is found with a gun, I am talking about a student bringing a gun to school—not a nonstudent gets in, particularly a student who brings a gun to school and the administration of the school and teachers find out about it, what happens to that person?

Ms. BROWN. Well, at my school, if you bring—the shooting that happened, it didn't happen in the school, it happened—it was a conflict in front of the school outside. But if someone is found with a weapon inside the school, they are—they call the police or whatever, they get locked up. First, they get questioned. They get expelled from school, and they turn them over to the police, their parents or whatever. But we have to go through a metal detector at our school.

Mr. SCHIFF. But they are expelled from the school?

Ms. BROWN. Yes.

Mr. SCHIFF. May I ask if anyone else wishes to answer?

Mr. SCHUMER. Go ahead. Megan and then Deseree.

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. Well, I know a girl, she brought a—it wasn't really a real gun but it was a gun that shot blanks and the teachers found it. She was suspended for 5 days. But I am pretty sure if you would bring—you were to bring a real gun into school, you would probably get expelled.

Mr. SCHUMER. Next is Deseree.

Ms. TROY. At my school, not the school I go to now but the school I went to before I went to this school, at the beginning of the year, if they found a gun in your locker, all they did was suspend you and send you to a—what is that? I think that——

Mr. SCHUMER. An alternative school?

Ms. TROY. Yes. An alternative school. That is all they—and the only time you get expelled is if you aim the gun at somebody. I think that is what it was.

Mr. SCHUMER. OK.

Mr. SCHIFF. You have to aim the gun at somebody to be expelled?

Ms. TROY. Yes.

Mr. SCHUMER. OK. Anyone else?

Mr. SCHIFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SCHUMER. Sure. Mr. Washington, did you want to ask a question?

Mr. WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would like to thank all of you for your testimony. I think the opportunity for myself and the other of these guys up here who make policy, for people have the occasion and the opportunity to look you straight in the eye when you testified was worth the pain that you had to obviously suffer in order to come here and tell those stories, and I hope that something real good for all of us, as a country, comes out of the sacrifice that you make by being here today.

I have one question. I want you to think about it for a minute. You have an opportunity with these, there are some powerful people. I am not one of them.

Mr. SCHUMER. Don't let him fool you. He is, too.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Some of these guys have been in Congress a long time and the thoughts that they have and the things that they do and the words that they say can really change things for people, and you have a wonderful opportunity now to give them your ideas directly.

I just have one question. I am concerned about the guns, but I am concerned about the larger problem of people your age who somehow fall off the track and get into a life of crime and drugs and violence and gangs, and I have heard permeated and interwoven with the testimony of several of you, thoughts about young people, I think you said, who don't think that they are going to live to be 21. That is a horrible, horrible thought for me.

Tell us if you have any idea what it is that we can do as policymakers to help prevent young people from dropping out of school, from thinking that it is better to sell drugs than it is getting a job flipping hamburgers at McDonald's, from deciding between walking the narrow line and living a good life and growing up to be whatever your potential gives you an opportunity to be, and going off in the other direction, becoming a part of a gang and all the things that you know.

I am sure I am naive about some of the things you know and some of the things you see and some of the things you hear. But if you have any ideas on what we can do together, us and you, parents and boys clubs, girls clubs, in churches, whatever, what can we do? What can we do? I am screaming, what can we do to stop young people like yourselves and others? What can we do to prevent them from going wrong and selling drugs and getting in trouble and having to go to alternative schools and dropping out of school? What can we do?

Mr. SCHUMER. Monique.

Ms. MALLOY. First of all, what can you do? What I think you can do is—I am not going to say budget cuts, investment cuts because the money that is—the money is not—it is not a budget. I look at it being an investment into my future.

Mr. WASHINGTON. What money?

Ms. MALLOY. The money for the Greater Washington Boys and Girls Clubs. We have several investment cuts that have been cut from our boys and girls clubs, Greater Washington Boys and Girls Clubs.

I think you need to provide more programs, afterschool programs because that is what changed me and I am sure it can change the lives of other teenagers.

Mr. WASHINGTON. If we had afterschool programs, what will that do that is not now being done, if I may continue?

Mr. SCHUMER. Please, please.

Mr. WASHINGTON. What would that change? What would that do if we said OK. What if I had a magic wand and all the money that is needed for the after school programs, all over America, what would that do to young people like you? How would they think differently?

Ms. MALLOY. OK, for one, in my boys and girls club is that a lot of young people that used to come don't come anymore because we don't have a lot of activities in our boys and girls club and they come up there but they don't stay, you know.

They don't—because there is nothing to do there. We don't have a lot of activities in our boys and girls club, so you get—if we get more activities and things to do in our boys and girls club, then we can—you can keep some of them off the street. That is where they are going when they leave the boys and girls club.

Mr. WASHINGTON. So you think if young people had more activities after school then they would be involved in those activities and not go out on the street and stay there?

Ms. MALLOY. Yes.

Mr. WASHINGTON. When they go out on the street, is that what leads to them getting into trouble?

Ms. MALLOY. Yes. Yes. Very much so.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Why?

Ms. MALLOY. That is where these crimes happen. I mean, most of the crimes happen on the street. Drive-by shootings, they are just standing there on the street corner and somebody just drives by, you know. That is the way most of them happen.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Do the young people who go to activities like that think differently about drugs and guns and crime than the people who hang out on the corners?

Ms. MALLOY. I believe that—yes. Their time is being occupied with—you know, the time there is something positive. They are doing something positive with their time.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Positive.

Ms. MALLOY. They have to—they don't have, think negative things or hurt the people.

Ms. BROWN. Or they feel good about themselves where they don't have to be out on the streets; they know they have someplace to go other than the streets to turn to for somebody to talk to or somebody else who is not a positive person who can't really give them

that kind of affection or whatever they need, who isn't a good role model. But if they come inside to where people who do want to nurture them, to lead them in the right way, that can make a change, we don't really have that.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Something to help people feel better about themselves?

Ms. BROWN. Yes.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. MATEO. I think she is absolutely right. The key, we need more programs because we have to find a way that we can motivate young people by doing something creative and doing positive things. If it weren't for sports and all the activities that I do in my school and in the community, I would be hanging out in the streets probably doing nothing. I might not be doing a crime, but I would be doing nothing. I wouldn't be stimulated in any way.

What we need is more programs that motivate kids into doing creative things. Some programs like community sports things, maybe even—maybe even teaching for people that are interested in a career in teaching. Just anything to motivate people and to get them to do something besides waste their time selling drugs.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Thank you.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Washington.

Did you want to say something, Janea?

Ms. WELLS. You know, like the role models like on TV and don't do this. I think they should come out and see how it really is instead of just saying, well, this is wrong and that is wrong and stuff like that. I feel they should come out and really see how young kids feel and talk to them and get the idea of how their neighborhood is.

Mr. WASHINGTON. What would that change if they came out instead of talked through the television to you?

Ms. WELLS. I feel that kids would see that the adults really care about them and concerned about changing their neighborhoods and, you know, that might change the young person. It might, too, because they feel that way. If the older role model have reached their goal in life and, you know, become big and stuff, maybe that that could do the same thing for them.

Ms. MALLOY. Excuse me. Like she was saying about the role models, instead of them talking on TV coming out in the community, I agree with her because I believe they just look in on the outside of the circle. We are living in the inside of the circle so we know what is going on and they standing on the outside of the circle trying to help and preach. I think in order for them, they got to walk the walk and stop talking the talk. It is a lot of talking being done and there is no action being shown. People, our friends, are still dying.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Just one little question. I am listening very carefully to what you are saying. Sometimes when I go out to speak to middle schools and high schools and I am up there talking, somehow I get the impression, you know, I see some of the young whispering to each other and turning around, and basically when I was that age I called that being disrespectful. And I mean, I don't mean no harm by it, I am just saying, so maybe there is something wrong with the way that the message is being delivered. In other

words, showing up is good. I don't mind going. I go to a lot of schools here in D.C. as a role model and I try to interact, but is there a way that we need to talk to let you know that we care? I mean, what do we need to do to let you know that we really do care about what is going on in your life?

We got to care because 30 years from now people your age are going to be sitting up here. And we want a larger number, not a smaller number, of them to be the ones competing for this job. We don't want just one kid out of your class to be the only one who goes to college, who is the only one who is qualified to be a Member of Congress. If there are 40 of you, then you got to compete against them which means your mind has got to be sharper and better and stronger and you have got to be more committed in your heart to doing what is right and then you get the gold prize and come up here. What is it about the message? When you stand up before a crowd of young people at a junior high school and they are not paying attention, you feel like you are wasting your time by going.

Ms. MALLOY. Because it has been—I don't blame you because it has been so many people going to school talking and they not doing, thinking they just going, they are wasting their breath, just going so they can get some new publicity. Like when you were saying when the lights go down, they stop talking about the issue.

Mr. WASHINGTON. OK. You are all hip to that. So people making noise but they are not doing anything?

Ms. MALLOY. That is right. That is right.

Mr. WASHINGTON. You said something about talking the talk and walking the walk.

Ms. MALLOY. Yes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Washington. I think there are several of my colleagues who have questions.

Ms. Edelman, who is on our second panel, is going to have to leave, so maybe what we could do, and let me ask your indulgence. I mean, these conversations are as important as any we could have. I see Ms. Edelman is saying more. Why don't we try to continue it a little while longer.

Now we are going to have a vote. As I say in Brooklyn, "Oy vay." Why don't we try to do a few more questions and then we will finish up with this panel. So Mr. Ramstad was next.

Mr. RAMSTAD. In today's proceeding, like my good friend from Houston, like every member of this subcommittee, I deeply respect each and every one of you for your very courageous and moving testimony and for being here today.

Like Margaret and Ruth, I live in a middle class suburban district, and just 2 weeks ago I was reminded that this problem is not just an inner-city or big-city problem, like both of you experienced, and in my suburban district, a young 16-year-old was gunned down by three classmates over a $75 marijuana deal that went bad.

Twelve murders in my district. About half of them involving young people since July. So this is not just an inner-city or a big-city problem, it affects all of us.

I am also reminded of Edmund Burke, whom you studied in school I am sure, he said the primary function of government is to protect people in their homes and neighborhoods. Well if that is the primary function of government, then government has failed each

and every one of you 11 students here today, and we are failing the young people and the other people in America because we don't have safe neighborhoods, safe streets and we who are government need to act, and at the very least, Mr. Chairman, members, I hope that we can get to the President's desk Representative Glickman's Youth Handgun Safety Act.

We need to enact safe schools initiatives as part of any crime legislation that passes, and also we need to strengthen the Gun Free School Zones Act certainly, Mr. Chairman, and, again, I want to thank each and every one of you 11 people. Too often I think young people generally get a bad rap from adults, from the press. I just wish all of America could see each and every one of you here on this panel today because you are the future of our country and working together we can make it a safer America and I really appreciate your being here today. Thank you.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. Ramstad.

Mr. Glickman.

Mr. GLICKMAN. Fernando mentioned an option about more afterschool programs, but I am just curious, if you were a Congressman, if you were sitting right up here where we are right now, what would your steps be to work on this problem? Tell me what you would do. OK.

Mr. MATEO. What I would do is I would go into the cities, you know, come out of the buildings, take off the suits, learn the language, go out there, walk around, see what it is like. I mean, see what motivates the kids and that is just a little step that you take to building what could some day be a youth center where they have everything, you know, what kids like. You just can't pop up a kid's center that doesn't have certain things. It has to be what everybody likes.

Mr. GLICKMAN. OK. Anybody else have any ideas what you would do? Criminal penalties, punishments, afterschool programs? If you were a Congressman what would you recommend? You have got some experience now. So we are asking for your expert testimony.

Ms. CHILDERS. One thing I would like to see is grassroots education taking place. I would like a national curriculum that teaches conflict resolution at a really young age and maybe some handgun safety because it starts young. When their parents are at work and they don't have people at home when they are coming from school, I think kids need to learn somewhere how to be responsible and how to take care of themselves, and I think that is really important.

Mr. SCHUMER. Megan.

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. You said punishment.

Mr. GLICKMAN. Well, I don't know. Would you recommend anything there?

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. Well, that is kind of part of the problem. In school when a kid does something bad, the teacher doesn't call their parents, write a letter, yells at them. Threatens to do all these things and just puts the kid down even more and makes him do more bad stuff, so maybe you can try to help the kid and show them that you care instead of just putting him down.

Ms. TROY. I have a comment to your question that you asked what can you do. I have friends that—whose parents don't care

about them. My opinion is why don't we take more interest in the home, the way they live. If their parents—if half of these kids that are born, parents cared about them, there would not be half the problem. They want to feel accepted. That is why they do these things. They want people to look up to them. If we take more of an interest in what is going on at home, then I don't think there would be as many crimes committed.

Mr. WASHINGTON. May I ask one?

Mr. GLICKMAN. Sure.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Would a hug do any good? I mean, if somebody hugs you, does that make you feel better?

Ms. TROY. When my parents hug me, yeah that makes me feel good.

Mr. WASHINGTON. See, hugs don't cost anything.

Ms. TROY. Right. If we—there are parents that don't care what their kids do. Kids ask—there are parents that let their kids run in and out wherever they want, and what I am saying is take more of an interest at home because the reason these kids are doing these things are because they want to be accepted. They want to feel like somebody wants them, and when they do these things, makes people—makes them think that people are looking up to them, and what is really happening is that people are scared of them.

Mr. WASHINGTON. You mean they are doing it to get attention? We used to throw spitballs and airplanes to get attention. Now they are shooting guns, is what you are saying?

Ms. TROY. They are shooting people because they want somebody to look up to them, to notice them.

Mr. SCHUMER. Our next question is——

Mr. GLICKMAN. I think Tiffany had something to say. Tiffany had her hand up.

Mr. SCHUMER. I am sorry. Go ahead, Tiffany.

Ms. CRUZ. Like she said that the guy who killed her father, he was only put in for 25 years—I mean, to the age of 25. I feel another reason that kids are doing this is they know they are going to get out at the age of 25 and they can do whatever they want to do all over again.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Chairman, that is a question I think all of us would like to hear, at least in my State. I know many States are talking about at what age should children be held accountable as adults and I think it would be interesting to know.

Mr. SCHUMER. In other words, somebody commits a violent crime, at what age should they be treated like adults? What if it is a 10-year-old? What if it is a 15-year-old? In between that? A little higher? A little lower? What do you think? Fernando.

Mr. MATEO. I think if a child knows what he is doing and can distinguish from right and wrong, he should be put away for life.

Mr. SCHUMER. At what age do you think that usually happens? If you had to make a rough estimate—obviously, some kids earlier, some later, but what age do you think?

Mr. MATEO. I would say about 12, 11. It might sound a little strict, but if kids can distinguish right from wrong I think they should be put away for life.

Mr. SCHUMER. Megan.

Ms. MCGILLICUDDY. If a kid is old enough to be able to shoot somebody, then they are old enough to be put away.

Mr. SCHUMER. Go ahead, Janea. We will give you the last word.

Ms. WELLS. I feel what she says, if a kid picks up a gun and pulls the trigger and shoots somebody, then he should be held accountable for going to jail and serving a life sentence. He should go to jail since he took somebody else's life. I feel his life should be taken in jail. Go to jail.

Mr. SCHUMER. OK. George Gekas is asking Craig Washington if he heard that. And Craig, I am sure—this is a very good point for all of you and for all of us. Craig is asking George if he heard some of the things that were said before about afterschool centers, things like that.

But what I want to say to you young people, is we have a lot of differences of opinion on how to solve the problem, as you do. But I think your being here and showing us how violence not only infects the life of America, but robs our children of their childhood, should mean one thing to us and all of our colleagues, and that is that we do something, we don't just talk. I think it was Monique who said, we don't just talk the talk, but we walk the walk. And it is partially my job to see that this Congress walks the walk.

On behalf of this whole panel, we want to thank all of you. I think you have had an impact on every one of us and will affect what we do. You were wonderful. We are leaving only—people are rushing out of here because we have about 3 minutes left to vote on earthquake aid money to California and you can imagine that is an important topic and we want to vote on that.

But I want to thank each of you for coming. And I want to thank Ms. Edelman. I am going to rush right back. It will be another 3, 4 minutes and then we will hear from you. Thank you very much.

[Brief recess.]

Mr. SCHUMER. OK. We are going to resume, and I want to first thank Marian Wright Edelman for her indulgence here. We were going to have just witnesses who were children, but Ms. Edelman knows more about this than just about anybody else and she has been so helpful in helping us find some of the kids. I should also thank Aliza Rieger, and a special thanks to my staff.

That group of kids out there, just looking at them, was the most powerful symbol that could be found about us doing something. I really think, having talked to some of the Members, we are forging a consensus here. We are really beginning to forge a consensus. The kids had a greater consensus than we did.

Ms. Edelman is the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund. I was saying that she had said she had to be out by noon. She really has to be out by 10 minutes ago, so we will go very fast. I will skip some of the biography, but everybody knows the Children's Defense Fund is at the forefront of efforts to educate America about the needs of children.

Two weeks ago, the fund issued a landmark report on the effect of the guns and violence on children. I can't think of any better person to give perspective to the testimony that we have heard from the children today.

Ms. Edelman, thank you for both bearing with us and thank you much more importantly for all the good work you do.

STATEMENT OF MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN, PRESIDENT, CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

Ms. EDELMAN. Thank you and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your extraordinary leadership on this issue. I think it is morally shameful that you had to hold this hearing and I hope we never have to have another hearing like this. No child should have to experience the fear and despair and sense of loss that these young witnesses shared with us. It is time for adults to recognize that we have failed miserably in our basic responsibility as parents and as community leaders and religious leaders in protecting our children.

Between 1979 and 1991, almost 50,000 American children were killed by guns. This is roughly equal to the number of American battle casualties in the Vietnam war. An American child now is killed with a gun every 2 hours, equivalent to a classroom full every 2 days. Thousands more of our children are injured daily by gunfire. Although we don't know the exact numbers, the Centers for Disease Control estimate that there are five nonfatal gunshot wounds for every fatal one. That works out to over 26,000 children and youths injured by gunfire in 1991.

And hundreds of thousands more are neither killed nor physically injured but are still harmed every day by the pervasive violence around them, by losing parents like our witnesses described or siblings or classmates, having to sleep in bathtubs for cover, by losing much of their childhood and all of their innocence in this disgusting and immoral tidal wave of violence that reaches all corners of our society but particularly afflicts certain poor and minority and inner-city communities.

This is our Nation's undeclared civil war. More murders have been committed by strangers than by family members, neighbors, or acquaintances and, as you have pointed out, the plague of violence transcends race and class. Most murders involve guns and we have seen an increase in firearm use by young people and by people who kill young people.

And I will not read all the testimony here.

Mr. SCHUMER. Without objection, your whole statement will be made part of the record.

Ms. EDELMAN. Obviously escalating violence against and by youths is no coincidence. It is the cumulative and convergent manifestation of a range of serious and too long neglected problems. Epidemic child and family poverty, increasing economic inequality, racial intolerance, pervasive drug and alcohol abuse, violence in our homes and popular culture, and growing numbers of out-of-wedlock births and divorces. If you add to this hordes of lonely and neglected children and youths left to fend for themselves by absentee parents in all race and income groups, we need to say to every parent, they need to start parenting. The young people talked about that very eloquently.

Gangs of inner-city and minority youths are relegated to the cellar of American life without education, jobs, or hope. I hope you all will get jobs back on the agenda so young people think they have something to do, hope of a future.

You add political leadership through the 1980's that paid much more attention to foreign than domestic groups, to the rich than to the poor, and that allowed young people to have easier and easier

access to deadlier and deadlier firearms, and you face what I believe is the social and moral disintegration of American society today.

I think we need to ask where are the family values in the richest Nation on Earth that lets 1 in 5 kids live in poverty, lets our young people's incomes plunge, and we need to ask what national security means when we have about 3 million children who witness parental violence every year and see children abused and neglected every 13 seconds. I think it is disgraceful that we let children grow up wondering whether they are going to reach the age of 18.

What do we do? I think we deal with the absolute unbridled trafficking of guns. You have provided leadership on the Brady bill. I hope this year you will achieve passage of the assault weapon ban. I hope we can see the regulation of guns as the dangerous products they are.

We regulate teddy bears and all kinds of things. When lawn darts killed three people, we pulled them off the market. How can we continue to let guns, which kill and injure thousands of our young people and citizens every year, continue to be so unregulated? So I hope that will be the first thing that you all do.

Second, I think you have heard young people say that they need afterschool, weekend and summer programs. The "Ounce of Prevention" fund in the Senate crime bill I hope you will ensure will be out there. You must have at least one ounce of prevention for every pound of cure. We have got to give young people some alternatives to the street, positive role models, and I hope that you will insist that that set of provisions included in any final crime bill.

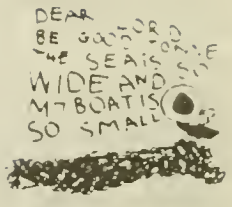
Third, I hope you will stop the marketing of guns to children. I just would like to read one outrageous set of messages that we are seeing gun dealers marketing to kids for profit, when one ad asked,"How old is old enough?" and concluded that: "Age is not the major yardstick. Some youngsters are ready to start at 10, others at 14. The only real measures are those of maturity and individual responsibility."

"Does your youngster," the ad asks, "follow directions well? Is he conscientious and reliable? Would you leave him alone in the house for 2 or 3 hours? Would you send him to the grocery store with a list and a $20 bill? If the answer to these questions or similar ones is 'yes,' then the answer can only be 'yes' when your child asks for his first gun."

I think we should continue to make pariahs of those who begin to market to kids, in the form of guns which don't make us safe and in our television and popular culture as fun. But I think the most essential first step for this Congress right now, with your leadership, is to take strong measures to control and regulate guns and ammunition and, second, to give young people some positive alternatives and some positive hope in the form of afterschool and weekend and summer programs and jobs.

I thank you very much for holding this hearing.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Edelman follows:]



Children's Defense Fund

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: KIDS TALK ABOUT GUNS

TESTIMONY OF MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

BEFORE THE

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME

February 3, 1994

This morning, each and every one of these eloquent young people has described the morally unthinkable. No child should have to experience such fear, despair, and sense of loss. Yet, violence has become a routine aspect of many of our children's lives because we adults have failed miserably in our most basic responsibility -- protecting our children.

Tragically, the lives of thousands of other American children also have been blighted by gun violence. Between 1979 and 1991, almost 50,000 American children were killed by guns. That is roughly equal to the number of American battle casualties in the Vietnam war. In 1991 alone -- the most recent year for which we have complete data -- 5,356 children and youths died from gunshot injuries. One American child now is killed with a gun every two hours -- the equivalent of a classroom full of children every two days.

Thousands more children are injured by gunfire. Although we do not know the exact numbers, the Centers for Disease Control estimate that there are five non-fatal gunshot injuries for every fatal one. That works out to over 26,000 children and youths injured by gunfire in 1991.

And hundreds of thousands more are neither killed nor physically injured, thank God, but still are harmed every day by the pervasive violence around them, by losing parents or siblings or classmates, by having to sleep in bathtubs for cover, by losing much of their childhood and all of their innocence to this immoral and disgusting tidal wave of violence that reaches all

corners or our society but particularly afflicts certain poor and minority and inner-city communities.

The ugly, malignant tumor of violence devouring American communities has spread to younger and younger children. Twice as many American children under the age of 10 were killed by firearms in 1991 as American soldiers were killed in the Persian Gulf and Somalia combined. Just the 560 American 10- to 14-year-old children who died from guns in 1990 were twice the number of handgun deaths of citizens of all ages in all of Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia combined that year.

In this nation's undeclared civil war, the majority of murders are committed not by strangers but by family members, neighbors, or acquaintances. The national plague of violence transcends racial boundaries and is far more likely to strike at home than on the streets. Where the race of murderers is known, about 83 percent of the murderers of Whites are White and about 94 percent of the murderers of Blacks are Black.

And, most murders involve guns. In 1992, nearly 70% of the homicides reported by the F.B.I. involved firearms. Firearms account for virtually the entire increase over the last several years in the homicide rate for children and youths. For example, between 1985 and 1990, the <u>non-firearm</u> homicide rate remained essentially constant for 15- to 19-year-olds; during those same four years, the <u>firearm</u> homicide rate for that age group

increased by almost 150%.[1]

An increasing share of juveniles also is acquiring and using firearms. Despite a declining juvenile population, juvenile arrests for murder rose by almost 93% between 1982 and 1991. By contrast, arrests for murder among individuals 18 years of age and older grew by less than 11%. Approximately 80% of juvenile murders now involve firearms.

Escalating violence against and by children and youths is no coincidence. It is the cumulative and convergent manifestation of a range of serious and too-long neglected problems: epidemic child and family poverty, increasing economic inequality, racial intolerance, pervasive drug and alcohol abuse, violence in our homes and popular culture, and growing numbers of out-of-wedlock births and divorces. Add to these crises hordes of lonely and neglected children and youths left to fend for themselves by absentee parents in all race and income groups, gangs of inner-city and minority youths relegated to the cellar of American life without education, jobs, or hope, political leadership through the 1980s that paid more attention to foreign than domestic enemies and to the rich than the poor, and easy access to deadlier and deadlier firearms, and you face the social and spiritual disintegration of American society that confronts us today.

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[1]Between 1985 and 1990, the firearm homicide rate for 15- to 19-year-olds increased from 5.8/100,000 to 14.0/100,000. By contrast, the non-firearm homicide rate increased from 2.8/100,000 to 3.1/100,000.

Where are the family values in the richest nation on earth that let one in five, or 14.6 million, of our children live in poverty in 1992 -- five million more than in 1973? How much concern do we have for the future when young families with children of all races saw their median income plunge nearly one-third between 1973-1990? What does national security mean when an estimated three million children witness parental violence every year, and a child is reported abused and neglected every 13 seconds? How can we expect the 100,000 children who are homeless every night and have no place to call their own to respect the homes and property of others?

We have not valued millions of our children's lives and so they do not value ours in a society in which they have no social or economic stake. Countless youths are imprisoned by lack of skills in inner-city neighborhoods where "the future" means surviving the day and living to 18 is a triumph. Their neglect, abuse, and marginalization by parents, schools, communities, and our nation turned them first to and against each other in gangs and then against a society that would rather imprison than educate them.

While we have declined to invest in our children over the last two decades, we also have saturated their lives with images of glorified violence. I am not referring just to violent entertainment programming either. With the local news vying to cover the bloodiest crime in the most graphic manner, many adults, let alone children, have the sense that violent crime is

even more routine than it actually is.

Having imbued millions of youths with a sense of hopelessness and surrounded them with a culture of violence, we then gave them easy access to guns. We adults let gun manufacturers flood the market with guns of growing lethality; we even let those guns be marketed to children. More than 200 million guns are in private circulation in America. Millions of new guns, many of them with mass-market availability, enter our communities each year. In fact, these days, you can get a Saturday night special for about the price of a text book. You often can get a license to sell guns with less hassle than it takes to get a driver's license and can buy, across the counters of some of our largest chain stores, a gun as readily as a toaster -- actually, more readily, since the safety of toasters is regulated.

Although, at times, the situation seems overwhelmingly bleak, there is hope -- both in terms of programs that prevent violence and in terms of progress in the struggle to enact sane and effective firearms regulations.

First, programs for children and youth that help children -- one at a time -- do exist, even in our most crime-ravaged communities. We must ensure that quality programs that keep children safe and out of trouble get our support. That is why it is imperative that the final version of the crime bill contain the three Ounce of Prevention provisions currently contained in the Senate crime bill. These provisions, which have

bi-partisan support, authorize almost a billion dollars for afterschool, summer, academic enrichment and extracurricular programs for elementary and secondary school age children in high crime and high poverty areas.

Our children and our communities need these programs now. In a November, 1993 Newsweek/CDF poll of children and their parents, when asked the one best way to keep children in their community safe from violent crime, the highest percentage of parents -- over one third (34%) -- called for more after-school programs. Almost half (48%) of the children indicated that community organizations are important sources of guidance for them; 85% said they turn to churches for guidance.

Quality afterschool and summer programs provide children with the critical ingredients of good, solid futures -- positive alternatives, skills, hope, and a safe place just to be children. We must ensure that all children who need these programs have access to them. It simply is not rational public policy to precondition our willingness to spend money on our children on their getting into trouble.

Second, passage of the Brady bill, for which I applaud Congress and the President, and you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership, was an important first step towards a rational gun policy. However, there still is a long way to go. While we work to effect critical long term changes, we also must work to reduce the current easy access to technologically advanced and increasingly cheaper non-sporting firearms. It is our only hope

for reducing the number of children who will be killed tomorrow, and next week, and next year, our only means of ensuring that a black eye or a cut, rather than multiple bullet wounds, will be the consequence of a spat.

In order to reduce the lethality, the deadliness, of violence we must get guns off our streets, and out of our schools, and out of our homes. Firearms are virtually the only unregulated dangerous consumer product in the United States. Indeed, although our nation regulates the safety of countless products including children's teddy bears, blankets, toys, and pajamas, it does not regulate the safety of a product that kills and injures tens of thousands of children and other citizens each year.

We must not continue to wait to heed the plea of today's young witnesses. We must not continue to allow the interests of one <u>industry</u> that traffics in lethality to supersede our children's survival. The September 1991 issue of the National Shooting Sports Foundation's official newsletter contains an advertisement with the following headline: "Scouting & 4-H Magazines Bring Shooting Message to 5,000,000 Potential Customers." Another ad encouraging parents to buy guns for their children queries "How old is old enough?" and concludes:

> Age is not the major yardstick. Some youngsters are ready to start at 10, others at 14. The only real measures are those of maturity and individual responsibility. Does your youngster follow directions well? Is he conscientious and reliable? Would you leave him alone in the house for two or three hours? Would you send him to the grocery

> store with a list and a $20 bill? If the answer to these questions or similar ones are 'yes' then the answer can also be 'yes' when your child asks for his first gun."

We must heed the plea of today's young witnesses. We know that rational gun regulations would begin to reduce the lethality of violence. I urge you to pass an assault weapons ban, stricter requirements for federal firearms dealers' licenses, and a system of regulation that would hold guns at least to the safety standards of other dangerous consumer products.

We personally and collectively must struggle to reclaim our nation's soul and to give back to our children a sense of hope and security, a belief in American fairness, and an ability to dream about, envision, and work towards a future that is attainable and real. We must fill our children with the joy and the promise of life, not the lack of opportunity and the crippling fear that so many encounter. We must stop the violence so that, while they are children, our children can be children, and so that they may have the opportunity to grow up to be healthy, productive adults.

Thank you.

Mr. SCHUMER. You did it fast and thank you for your role in being so helpful with the rest of the hearing, but more importantly on this issue, I think all of us on this committee doff our caps to you.

I again want to thank Aliza Rieger and Tom Diaz of my staff for doing the great job that they have done. And we are going to adjourn because I have got to go run and vote.

Once again to the kids who participated in this, you were just wonderful. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:41 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

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